

REMARKS

The present application was filed on August 7, 2000 with claims 1-15. Claims 1-15 remain pending.

In the outstanding Office Action dated May 13, 2004, the Examiner: (i) rejected claims 1-3, 8-10 and 15 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,665,422 to Seidel et al. (hereinafter "Seidel") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,567,546 to Eguchi et al. (hereinafter "Eguchi"); and (ii) rejected claims 4-7 and 11-14 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Seidel in view of Eguchi and U.S. Patent No. 6,028,956 to Shustorovich (hereinafter "Shustorovich").

With regard to the rejection of claims 1-3, 8-10 and 15 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Seidel in view of Eguchi, Applicants assert that the combination of Seidel and Eguchi fail to teach or suggest every element of claims 1-3, 8-10 and 15.

Seidel discloses a method and device for recognizing distribution data on postal packets by combining video coding with the automatic optical character recognition (OCR) evaluation process, including the search for the regions containing the desired information (ROIs).

Eguchi discloses a data medium handling apparatus for use in handling of documents. More specifically, an embodiment of Eguchi discloses a system that reads and stores image data of a document, stores rotated image data, extracts and stores dot information, integrates successive characters, analyzes the shape of the item data extraction constructed by the integrated characters, rotates the image when necessary, and recognizes characters in the item data.

Independent claims 1, 8 and 15 recite techniques for use in accordance with an automatic mail sorting machine in which a piece of mail is scanned in accordance with an address block locating (ABL) system, and the located address block is analyzed in accordance with an OCR system. A coupling is provided between the ABL system and OCR system, capable of feeding results associated with the ABL system as input to the OCR system and results associated with the OCR system as input to the ABL system. As stated in the Office Action, Seidel fails to disclose the novel coupling of an ABL system and an OCR system, as recited in independent claims 1, 8 and 15 of the present invention.

The Examiner contends that Eguchi discloses a coupling between the character recognition device (element 17) and the ROI locator and extractor (elements 309-313). However, independent claims 1, 8 and 15 recite a coupling between an ABL system and an OCR system in which one or more results associated with the OCR system can be fed as an input to the ABL system for locating one or more address blocks on a piece of post mail. Elements 309-313 of FIG. 9 of Eguchi, cited by the Examiner, disclose the extraction of dot information from pixel information and the storage of such information; the integration of successive characters based on the dot information into a character string in accordance with a rule set to extract item data; and the storing of the item data. The specification states that elements 309-313 of FIG. 9 “cooperatively construct the item data extraction section 2D.”

There is no mention of an address block locator, a region of interest locator, or a system performing a similar function in Eguchi. Further, since the process described in Eguchi simply inputs, stores and rotates the image there is no need to locate an address or region of interest on the document. Thus, Eguchi fails to disclose an ABL system or an ROI system, and thereby fails to disclose the novel coupling of an ABL system and an OCR system, as recited in independent claims 1, 8 and 15 of the present invention.

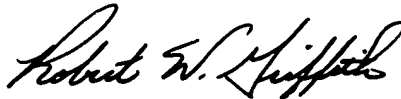
Applicants assert that dependent claims 2, 3, 9 and 10 are patentable for at least the reasons that independent claims 1 and 8, from which claims 2, 3, 9 and 10 depend, are patentable. Further, dependent claims 2, 3, 9 and 10 recite patentable subject matter in their own right. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection to claims 1-3, 8-10 and 15 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) is respectfully requested.

With regard to the rejection of claims 4-7 and 11-14 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Seidel in view of Eguchi and Shustorovich, Applicants assert that such claims are patentable for at least the reasons that independent claims 1 and 8, from which claims 4-7 and 11-14 depend, are patentable. The patentability of claims 1 and 8 is described above. Shustorovich discloses an object location and span determination in an image, but fails to disclose an ABL system or an OCR system, and thus, also fails to disclose the novel coupling of an ABL system and an OCR

system. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection to claims 4-7 and 11-14 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) is therefore respectfully requested.

In view of the above, Applicants believe that claims 1-15 are in condition for allowance, and respectfully request withdrawal of the §103(a) rejections.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert W. Griffith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Robert" and last name "Griffith" being clearly legible.

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